

WANDERERS GO SECOND BEHIND LEATHERHEAD

A CRACKING goal by Howard Kennedy sealed Wycombe Wanderers' fourth victory in five matches on Saturday — a record that puts them in second place in the Rothmans Isthmian League table, trailing only behind Leatherhead on goal average.

And so, once again, Wycombe are setting the pace as they have done for four seasons. Against Tooting and Mitcham on Saturday they began to look like a title winning outfit, for the first time this season. It was about the best performance of the term so far and although this team has still to really click into a unit, they showed some extremely promising attacking football.

Their opponents Tooting came to Loakes Park with about their strongest side for several seasons. Their only weakness was upfront where they lacked penetration but they were very sound both in the middle and the back. Their defence, with the bearded Steve Grubb outstanding, will undoubtedly lock out many other attacks in the league this season.

Tooting will probably be typical of the average Isthmian League club this term, for it seems that the top players have been evenly divided among many clubs. Only Kingstonian, who have suffered some real drubbings already, seem to be 'easy meat'. There are not, nor is there likely to be, a runaway leader at the top of the table like in previous years. With teams like Hendon and Walton splitting up, the players have all moved to different clubs and this year's campaign should be all the more interesting for it.

Wanderers are one of the few clubs who have been able to hang onto their players and have already shown their promise by dropping just one point so far — a 2-2 draw at Sutton. Their sternest test will come over the next few days when they make three trips to Dagenham, Hayes and Leatherhead.

By **STUART EARP** Wycombe W. 2, Tooting and M. 1

They needed a good performance on Saturday to set them up for this tough programme of matches and did enough to keep their fans in an optimistic frame of mind. One of the big improvements against Tooting was the midfield play. Although Terry Reardon was out injured, Mick Holfield, Howard Kennedy and Graham Mackenzie knitted together well and two of these players provided the goals. Holfield I thought had a particularly good game and seemed to spur on his two colleagues.

Another success was the move of Dave Bullock to his best position of centre back. However, this meant that Alan Phillips switched to full back and although he looked happier than Bullock in the number three

shirt, his talents of a central defender were wasted. Their defensive problem is impossible for manager Brian Lee to solve. Phillips, Bullock and Keith Mead are three top class central defenders and it seems a crime to make any one of them play at full back. Saturday's line-up, however, looked the best solution.

The teams kicked off in front of guest Sir Stanley Rous, and after only four minutes the crowd were buzzing. Perrin received the ball just inside the angle of the penalty box and fired in a fierce cross-shot which visiting 'keeper Dave Cobb could hardly have seen. About the only thing Cobb did see of the shot was when it rebounded off the far post and into his grateful arms.

Searle failed to test Cobb a few minutes later when put through by Perrin and then Tony Amos, a former striker at Loakes Park, saved his side when he cleared a curling cross from Mackenzie with the rest of the defence struggling. Amos is now playing in the full back shirt with Tooting. Roy Hare provided the visitors' first goal chance when he flashed a volley just

wide of the mark with John Maskell diving full length.

Tooting, at this stage, were looking useful. With Grubb and Piguille dominating the air and Ron Howell and Roy Mitchell working busily in midfield, they kept Wycombe in check and induced several errors. Then, with 18 minutes gone, Wanderers went one up. Horseman made the goal with a superb ball across and through the defence, right into the path of Holfield. Mick left Ford stranded for pace and curled a shot on the left foot over the goalkeeper.

Howell almost pulled an equaliser back for Tooting just before the break with an amazing dribble that took him past three defenders and right into the Wycombe box. When faced only by Maskell, however, he spoilt his earlier good work by lobbing the ball over the top.

Tooting opened the new half with a vengeance, forcing three quick corners. Once Nick Glover found enough space to hammer in a hard drive which Maskell turned around the post superbly only to find that the referee had blown for offside anyway.

The Wycombe defence came

in for its sternest testing at this stage but proved equal to anything the visitors could offer. Keith Mead was faultless at the heart of the defence while Paul Birdseye, who had a poor first half, made several timely interceptions to end Tooting attacks.

Wanderers came back well when Perrin and Horseman combined sweetly to test Cobb and then with 73 minutes gone a series of fine passes set Horseman clear on the top side but "Bodger's" cross just eluded Holfield at the far post. A rare error by Holfield forced Maskell to grab a weakly hit back pass at Glover's feet but in the 78th minute, Mackenzie sent a great chance sailing over the crossbar. Horseman, given time to control the ball perfectly in midfield, produced another defence splitting pass but Jock with only Cobb to beat mis-cued his shot. It was one of several chances that went un-taken.

Victory and three more points were sealed in the 82nd minute. Again it was the veteran Horseman who did the work. He won the ball in midfield and slipped it to Holfield on the

flank. The ball was laid back to Kennedy some 25 yards out and he sent a drive racing across the turf into the corner of the net with real power. Cobb had little chance and was beaten for sheer pace. It was Kennedy's second goal in two games and it was not his only contribution to the match.

Tooting did manage to pull back a goal in the 86th minute when their substitute Les Peck made the most of some over generous space to thump in a shot which Maskell, a fraction too far off his line, could only help into the net as it struck his outstretched fingertips. Sixty seconds later Dave Juneman became the first player to be booked at Loakes Park this term when he went into Mr. Boswell's book for continual dissent.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; P. Birdseye, K. Mead, D. Bullock, A. Phillips; G. Mackenzie, H. Kennedy, M. Holfield; A. Horseman, K. Searle, S. Perrin (sub. D. Evans 80 mins.).

TOOTING: D. Cobb; T. Ford, J. Piguille, S. Grubb, A. Amos; R. Howell, R. Mitchell, C. Gedney; N. Glover, D. Juneman, R. Hare (sub. D. Peck 66 mins.).

Referee: C. I. Boswell (Gillingham).

Half-time: 1-0. Goalscorers, Wycombe — Holfield (18), Kennedy (82). Tooting — Peck (86).

Official paying attendance: 1,363. **Approximate total attendance:** 1,600.

ROTHMANS DIVISION 1									
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts		
L'head	5	4	1	0	15	4	13		
Wycombe	5	4	1	0	9	4	13		
Clapton	5	4	0	1	7	3	12		
Enfield	5	4	0	1	5	3	12		
Ilford	5	3	2	0	8	4	11		
Sutton	5	3	1	1	9	5	10		
Dagenham	4	3	0	1	9	2	9		
Dulwich	5	3	0	2	10	6	9		
Tooting	5	3	0	2	7	6	9		
Stortford	5	2	1	2	9	7	7		
W'atow	5	2	1	2	6	5	7		
Oxford	5	2	0	3	5	11	6		
Woking	5	1	2	2	6	6	5		
Hendon	5	1	2	2	5	9	4		
Hitchin	5	1	1	3	6	9	4		
Walton	5	1	1	3	4	15	4		
Barking	4	1	0	3	4	4	3		
Hayes	5	0	3	2	4	6	3		
Bromley	4	1	0	3	3	5	3		
L'stone	5	1	0	4	2	10	3		
Kingston	5	1	0	4	1	9	3		
Slough	4	0	0	4	1	5	0		